

Harrisonburg Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee

Meeting Summary

February 2, 2009, 5:30pm, 409 S Main Street

Attendance: Thanh Dang (staff), Drew Williams (staff), Allison Banks (staff), Cindy Reeves (citizen), John Reeves (citizen), Lee Eshelman (JMU), Eldon Kurtz (EMU), Len Van Wyk (citizen), David Ehrenpreis (citizen)

Welcome

Old Business

1. Priorities List – Ms. Dang e-mailed committee members updated list prior to meeting. Costs were entered for previously unknown (both completed and planned projects). Committee members are encouraged to let Ms. Dang know of additional ideas/considerations for future projects.
2. Safe Routes to School – Keister Elementary – Project is currently under survey and design by City Engineer's office. Expect construction to start in May 2010 and completion in November 2010.
3. Safe Routes to School – Waterman Elementary – Tonya Osinkosky of RMH Community Health is leading the effort on completing School Travel Plan, a pre-requisite for infrastructure grant application. School Travel Plan identifies existing education programs, partners, etc. Tom Benevento will lead SRTS (Parent) Task Force and invite parents to participate and identify needed infrastructure. Task Force will work with City staff to identify infrastructure needs and priorities around school. Interested parents and citizens should contact Mr. Benevento, tbenevento@newcommunityproject.org.
4. CDBG Projects – E Washington & Vine Street sidewalks are near completion. Ms. Dang informed committee that new sidewalks in the Northeast Neighborhood are being explored for next FY 2009-2010 CDBG Application due February 23.
5. E Market Street Sidewalk – Phase I: between Burgess Rd and University Blvd – Project has been awarded to contractor. Construction expected to start within next couple of months. Committee members made note of worn path along this section of E Market St and looked forward to this project.
6. Country Club Rd/ S Main Street Railroad Crossing – City and Norfolk Southern signed agreement to complete construction of bicycle "paths" to provide safer bicycle crossings. Project to be started and completed this year, 2009.

7. South City Connection – Port Republic Rd to Stone Spring Rd adjacent to I-81 – Multi-use path concept is being developed by City Engineer’s office. Transit facility adjacent to this path is not possible due to conservation easement in Purcell Park. The conservation easement is part of the Purcell Park Stream Restoration Project and is in place to protect the stream and area around it. The easement (contract) only allows for a 10-ft wide pervious surfaced path. More information about Purcell Project, www.cleanstream.org.
8. Old Furnace Rd – Ms. Dang thanked Thomas Jenkins for meeting on site to review and discuss the development of bicycle facilities on Old Furnace Rd. Ms. Dang presented to the committee a cost estimate developed by Kenny Knight, Street Superintendent which included eradication and restriping of centerline, required excavation of existing shoulders to meet road standards, to excavate and rebuild shoulders. The total is \$562,005.00. This cost estimate does not include planned future improvements by the City.

Future plans for Old Furnace Rd is do include bicycle lanes on both sides from Vine Street to Smithland Rd. Road improvements along the frontage of North 38 was designed to also accommodate future bicycle lanes. The developer was required to give the City the needed right-of-way and widen the road because these needed improvements were identified in the City’s Master Transportation Plan (part of the Comprehensive Plan) as well as the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans. The City plans to work with developers in the future to make continued improvements to Old Furnace Rd.

9. Mt. Clinton Pike – City staff reviewed and will keep road design as it currently exists today and not reduce travel lanes to accommodate bicycle lanes (considered was reducing existing 4-travel lanes to 2-travel lanes, 1 center two way turn lane, and 2 bicycle lanes). Ms. Dang & Mr. Williams explained that Mt. Clinton Pike was constructed as a 4-lane facility in anticipation of greater volumes needed to service the area and connections to improvements planned in the vicinity including in Rockingham County. A map from Rockingham County’s Comprehensive Plan was shared with committee members (viewable at: <http://www.rockinghamcountyva.gov/showpage.aspx?pageID=237>, see Section II: Transportation - Harrisonburg & Vicinity maps). There are also concerns of pushing existing traffic onto other streets. Ms. Dang encourages the committee to consider a multiuse path concept through the area.

Mr. Van Wyk stated that he believes city staff’s position is a bad idea and that if lanes are not re-striped to accommodate bicycle lanes now then nothing will happen. Re-striping bicycle lanes is cheaper than constructing a multiuse path, which on the Priorities list estimate is \$315,451.00.

Mr. Williams made a correction to a statement he made at the November meeting. The City receives \$16,000 per lane mile in state maintenance dollars. The City does not receive maintenance dollars for non travel lanes and would lose over \$40K if 2 travel lanes were removed. Committee members commented that this is formula for state maintenance dollars is

problematic and impedes localities from making potentially good improvements to roadways to accommodate bicycle lanes.

10. Bicycle Education Campaign at JMU – The City will be partnering with Dr. John Stone’s Public Campaigns class this semester. This campaign will be focused at JMU students, faculty, and staff and may include posters, flyers, PSAs, bus ads etc (exact media still to be determined). It is anticipated that the campaign materials can be adapted for other EMU and Bridgewater college in the future by the City and Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Bicycle/Pedestrian Education Committee. Mr. Van Wyk encouraged that the campaign focus on both cyclist and motorist responsibilities (ex. when a bicyclist should behave as a vehicle and stop at red lights and when it should behave as a pedestrian and cross an intersection with the crosswalk signal). Ms. Dang mentioned that the campaign will adopt ideas from Tulane University’s Guide for “Higher Education: Bicycle Safety for Colleges and Universities” (viewable at: <http://bike.tulane.edu/research.htm>). Mr. Reeves suggested that the committee and others could be used as a focus group to help with the campaign if needed.

Mr. Eschelman shared that he is working on a class project with Dr. Georgia Polacek, JMU Health Sciences, on identifying opportunities for bicycle facilities (routes and racks) on campus as well as distributing surveys about modes of travel on campus. Ms. Dang is also working with another group in Dr. Polacek’s class to identify opportunities for students traveling off campus from their apartments to campus.

Mr. Reeves asked if the Arboretum Trail was being used heavily by students. Committee members thought that it was. Mr. Reeves heard that part of the trail was being eroded/washed out. Although the City paved the path from Neff Ave to the Arboretum, JMU did not pave within the Arboretum to University Blvd. Ms. Dang had been informed by former Councilor Chenualt that Charlie King, VP Administration & Finance, said JMU did not want to pave the path due to liability concerns and costs.

11. City Bicycle Route Map – Ms. Dang presented the map that was developed and shared at last September’s International Festival. Mr. Eschelman has been working on identifying on JMU campus bicycle routes for the map, but has not yet received final approval from JMU. Ms. Dang was given permission to post the map in draft form on the website (www.harrisonburgva.gov/bikeped) to solicit comments. Ms. Dang’s vision is that after the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans are updated that a Bicycle Map for Harrisonburg would be published, similar to those from Arlington County and City of Alexandria, and distributed at local bicycle shops and Tourism offices.

New Business

12. Pedestrian Access to Public Transit/ bus stops – Ms. Dang shared that greater coordination between Public Works and Public Transportation has been occurring for installation of concrete

pads (for bus shelters, benches, etc) where new sidewalks are being constructed. Public transportation services and bus stops are an important part of Pedestrian travel.

Ms. Reeves suggested that Public Transportation ask Dennis Coffman of RMH about former “butt huts” that might be usable as bus shelters. These “butt huts” were removed when the hospital adopted its non-smoking policy and are currently believed to be in storage.

Mr. Ehrenpreis asked about bus routing and suggested that bus maps be posted at bus stops throughout the City to help increase ridership. He said many people see a bus stop, but they do not know where buses travel. Ms. Dang noted that bus routes and schedules are reprinted each semester due to changes in use and new student housing developments each year. Mr. Williams noted that bus maps can be difficult to develop because so many routes converge on the same routes into and through JMU campus. Mr. Ehrenpreis suggested that developing a bus map for the City could be a good graphic design project and that he knows someone who may be able to help. Ms. Dang will share these comments with Public Transportation.

13. University Blvd – Ms. Dang presented that \$200,000 is available in Capital Improvement Funds for the construction of sidewalks on University Blvd between E Market St and Reservoir St. Sidewalk is being planned for the north side of University Blvd (same side as Regal Theater, IHOP and Kmart). There is only 5.5 ft of right-of-way available, and therefore no room for grass/utility strip. Mr. Williams noted that there have been requests from area businesses and professional offices for sidewalks for both customers and employees. This project is expected to start this year.
14. Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Updates – Ms. Dang will go before Planning Commission in March to request its blessing to begin working on next updates. Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans will be combined into one document, and will be developed concurrently with the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Dang expects that Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Committee members will meet once a month and will have the Plan ready for adoption in 2010. **Individuals interested in participating in the Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning Committee let her know by March.**
15. Access to Smithland/Skyline Middle Schools – Ms. Reeves asked about future plans to Country Club Rd. She shared that students living in trailer park have an unsafe walk on Country Club Rd up to Linda Lane (where a multiuse path does exist). Mr. Williams responded that improvements to Country Club Rd are on both the City’s list of Capital Improvements Project and the Master Transportation Plan. Phase 1 – from Interstate 81 to Linda Lane. Phase 2 – Linda Lane to E Market St. Improvements will include sidewalks and bicycle lanes. There is no defined schedule yet for when improvements will come.

A question was raised why a multiuse path is not being considered on Country Club Rd. Mr. Williams responded that along corridors with lots of entrances a multiuse path adjacent to the roadway presents many points of conflict, ex. Chicago Ave. Multiuse paths are best applied where there are no or few entrances.

16. S Main St between Port Republic Rd and downtown – Mr. Williams shared a concept that JMU and the City are working on within this corridor to install landscaped medians. He noted that the wide curb lane currently available on S Main St may be encroached given the size of medians. (Currently the outer travel lanes are 14 ft wide, while inner travel lanes are 11-ft). Current pavement width is not wide enough for bicycle lanes. For bicycle lanes to be painted and to maintain 4 travel lanes it would require removing and constructing new curb and gutter to widen the pavement.

Mr. Ehrenpreis and several committee members noted that bicycle facilities along this corridor are very important and that a lot of people currently use the corridor on bikes and more people would bike if appropriate bicycle facilities were present. Another committee member noted that the City is encouraging more bicycling and encouraged that the City and JMU work to include bicycle facilities in the concept/plan.

17. Upcoming Events for Outreach –
- a. Blacks Run/ Downtown Clean Up Day's Green Scene (April 11)
 - b. Rockingham County Fair's Green Tent (Aug 17-22)
 - c. International Festival's Green Village (Sept 26)

Ms. Dang strongly encouraged that committee members and their agencies/organizations participate in these events. Ms. Dang hopes that the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization and its partners will continue the "Walk Smart, Bike Smart" displays similar to what was done for at last year's Green Village. Individuals interested in volunteering a few hours for "Walk Smart, Bike Smart" can contact Bonnie Rediesel, bonnie@cspdc.org or Ms. Dang.

18. Robert Woods Johnson Foundation Grant – Ms. Reeves made an announcement that her agency and partners have applied for the RWJF Grant to have programs that encourage healthy foods and fitness. The community has many initiatives, programs, and completed projects that strengthened the grant application. Ms. Dang noted that the City had submitted a letter of support.

19. BIKESAFE & PEDSAFE Publications – Ms Dang shared that these publications can be ordered FREE of charge from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/PED_BIKE/ped_bike_order.htm. These are really great references/resources and have good case studies.

Adjourn

This meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm.

The NEXT MEETING will be on Monday May 4, 2009, 5:30pm at Community Development, 409 S Main St.